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THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

GEORGE WILLIAM KNOX
ARTHUR CUSHMAN McGIFFERT
FRANCIS BROWN

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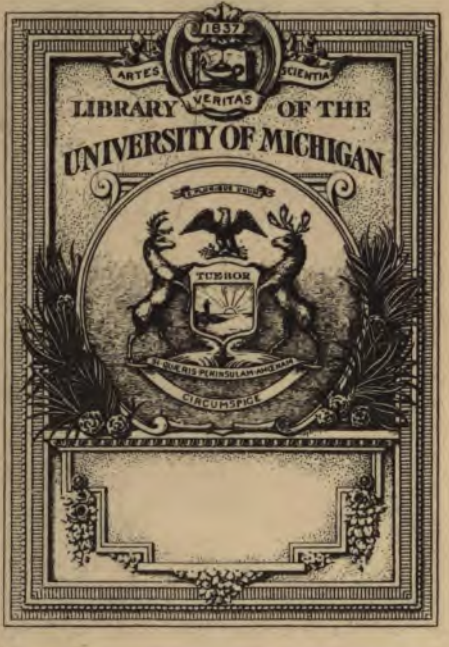

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THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

Three Addresses

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM KNOX
ARTHUR CUSHMAN McGIFFERT
FRANCIS BROWN

PROFESSORS IN UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
NEW YORK

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1902

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Published September, 1902

Mrs. M. L. Burton

PREFATORY NOTE

THESE Addresses were delivered at the Union Theological Seminary, New York, within one academic year. It appeared that, without prearrangement, they were closely related in theme and attitude. With variety and even divergence as to matters of detail, they agree in laying supreme emphasis on Jesus Christ as the source, standard, guide, and authority in Christian knowledge as in Christian life. Jesus Christ is presented in them all as affording the distinctively Christian point of view.

They are now brought together and published, in response to the request of some who heard them. If they help any persons to a better understanding of the relation of Christ to Christianity, and particularly to Christian thinking, and thus lead to a widening of his dominion over the heart and over the mind, the authors will be very glad and grateful.

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I

THE PROBLEM FOR THE CHURCH

AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE OPENING SERVICE OF THE SIXTY-SIXTH ACADEMIC YEAR OF UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1901

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM KNOX

PROFESSOR OF THE PHILOSOPHY AND HISTORY OF RELIGION

THE PROBLEM FOR THE CHURCH

THE agitation for a change in the confessional statements of the Presbyterian Church is significant of a wide-spread unrest. Even though formal discussion be not elsewhere so prominent, yet throughout the Church universal there is discontent and a feeling that "the times are out of joint." Painfully slow progress is made in winning the world to our Lord, and the question is raised whether Christianity so much as holds its own.

Were this the result of some determined attack or because of some unusual obstacle in the way, the Church would put forth its strength with faith undaunted as to the issue; but never before was there so little violent opposition, never before were

there so many open doors, and never before were such vast resources at the disposal of the Church. Nor are we chiefly troubled by denominational and party strifes, for these are few and without unusual bitterness, but the difficulty is in fundamental articles of the creed itself. Protestants, advocates of the broadest education, champions of free thought, open to the intellectual currents of the age, feel an influence which makes them hesitate. The widening separation between traditional theology and the scientific culture of our times produces a semi-paralysis of faith.

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for battle, and if the children of the Church doubt, who shall hear their message?

In certain quarters, it is true, there is a renewal of confidence and a belief that conflict is ended and a new period of peace and progress begun; but the peace would seem to be only the quiet after the battles of the half-century past, with

science victorious all along the line, and the Church ready neither to renew the conflict nor to consider seriously the actual situation. There can be no well-grounded hope as to the future, and no helpful appeal to the present, until the Church once more sees clearly the truth it must teach, and is able to state with deepest conviction the message it has received. Meanwhile discussion, and not misplaced confidence and premature peace, is our need, if we are to win triumphs in the time to come.

The problem for the Church is not to be found among the great questions of the past, of Calvinism and Arminianism, of sacraments and orders, of ritual and organization, of the Trinity and the atonement; nor is it among the questions, so sharply debated in recent years, of authenticity and inerrancy, of inspiration and revelation. All these, important and connected not remotely with the essential truths of our religion, are not central, and their answer will not decide our issue.

For we are concerned with the greatest of problems debated through the ages. Back from all outworks, back through all interior lines of defence, we have been forced, and the question of all questions is once more raised within the confines of the Church itself, What think we of God?

The situation is not arbitrary. It is not devised by any set of men. It is not thrust upon us by atheists, nor planned by wicked men who would cast aside Jehovah's bands from them, nor does it arise from the restless curiosity of philosophers intent on some new thing. Nor, on the other hand, is it the outcome of the doubt, or ignorance, or bigotry, or rationalism, or traditionalism of the Church. It is formed by the great intellectual movement of our age and inseparable from it. It is forced upon us because the Church is not asleep in a cloister, but participates in the interests of living men. Great historic movements beyond man's control meet together, and at the meeting-place we ask ourselves again, What think we of God?

The importance of the question needs no discussion. Religion for any individual is communion with the God he knows. The description of this God is his theology, its adoration is his worship, and obedience to its commands is his rule of life. The central religious fact is communion with God, or, in more technical language, it is the realization in experience of the truth set forth in creed.

This inner reality finds expression in acts of praise, worship, and obedience, and its content is expressed in creed and confession. Without experience, worship is a vain form, but none the less the experience itself can be fully real only through appropriate expression. So, too, theology without the living experience is the most formal and unsatisfying of philosophies; but, equally, experience separated from the conceptions embodied in confession and creed is empty, a thing impossible, a feeling without contents. The three, worship, theology, and experience, are indissolubly bound together

in the unity of feeling, thought, and will.

Thus it is that experience varies with the various objects worshipped, and, equally, the object worshipped varies with our varying experience. Indeed, the two are opposite sides of one reality, to be wholly separated at our peril. As the old saying teaches that the same thing done by different men is not the same thing, so may we say of ourselves. The same experience at different times and under differing circumstances is not the same experience. That which we call the same varies with our varying consciousness. So we have learned that there is no general reason, everywhere and always the same, but reason differing in method, contents, and principles, a reason Occidental and a reason Oriental, a reason differing with race and age and nation, indeed in some degree with every individual. So is it emphatically with religion. Religion in general is almost meaningless, a religion reduced to the lowest terms and defecated

to a transparency. A religion according to Confucius, or according to Buddha, or according to the lowest savage tribes, we know, but religion in general, this we know only to discover that it is merely a verbal classification, a starting-point for real thought. For no general term can give us the fulness of the most meagre concrete reality, still less of God. He cannot be known by generalizing the results of our studies of all the gods, nor can our religion consist in the realization of so artificial an abstraction in experience. No lesson taught by the science of comparative religion is plainer than this.

Each great religion has its object of supreme adoration and its own form of religious experience. In every great historic religious community are men learned in scriptures and philosophy, but finding pleasure solely in the intellectual pursuit; in all are many who are devoted in form only, going with the multitude who keep holy day; but in all alike are some who verify in experience that which is ex-

pressed in the creed. In these men religion lives and moves and has its being. From them only can we learn the true meaning of the religious symbols, and they only are competent witnesses to the faith. Thus it is not by comparing true Christians with hypocrites and formalists in other religions, but only by comparing the best with the best, saints with saints, that we can estimate aright the value of the differing faiths.

Thus comparing, we cannot find that all alike worship, under varying names, the same Supreme Being, or that all alike seek the same great end. Such a generalization makes an abstract Infinite supreme and finds worship truest as it is most emptied of all positive content, and religious experience at highest to be a vague, indescribable state of feeling, best of all if so vague that no positive term can be applied to it. But such theology, whose highest word is the Unknowable, and such worship, mysticism in its purest form, is not the actual religious experience dis-

closed by the study of living representatives of the ethnic faiths. Buddhist and Confucianist neither worship the same being nor seek the same end, and the great Chinese philosophers of the twelfth century A.D. were right in breaking the alliance between the two religions which had lasted for a thousand years. What Confucius affirmed, Buddha denied, and the highest virtue of the Buddhist appeared the act of a madman to the followers of the Sage. The solution of the religious problem cannot be found in melting down differences into an undifferentiated, colorless, all-embracing unity. Such a process in physics gives us chaos instead of cosmos, in psychology the first stirrings of life in the infant, and in religion at best only the raw material out of which the mature religious life has come. Nor can we combine more positively the elements of the differing religions, for syncretism is always weak, bearing within itself a contradiction which ends in death. A religion of all religions either annexes all to

one or saves all at the expense of losing in each precisely that which is best worth saving.

Not, then, by generalization nor by syncretism, but by differentiation must we seek the solution of our problem. And if we still dream of some higher unity, it shall be won as each is true to the truth as he sees it, and as each religion and each individual clearly defines the object of his adoration in his thought and realizes it in his experience. We would, then, emphasize the adjective and study the problem of the *Christian* faith.

No doubt we are agreed in this, but if we are thus to differentiate, if the way to God is not by compromise with Buddha or Confucius or the Hindu faith, we cannot stop at this point, but must follow it to the end.

What, then, does the Christian worship? The answer is not doubtful — God. He is the centre of our theology; to know him is the religious life, to praise him and pray to him is worship, and to obey him is mo-

rality. How, then, is he made known? Dwell a moment on the question, for the word God helps us not at all, since "all men yearn after the gods." What does the word God mean to us, to Christians?

How do *we* learn of him? Again the answer is unquestioned — through Christ. So the Church believes: "Light of light, very God of very God." So the Scriptures testify: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" To us, though God spake to the fathers by the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, yet is his message through his Son, who is the effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance. As the Christian sees this glory he exclaims, "My Lord and my God!"

But though the answer is so obvious, writ so large upon the page we call the Word of God, yet, as matter of fact, theology has travelled by quite a different road. In general, we may say, it has sought to go up through nature to nature's

God, to God as Creator of nature, his wisdom and power seen through nature, his attributes described and analyzed by a method learned in schools far other than those of the apostles and prophets. Thus it has been the God of reason and nature first, with proofs from nature, at most supplemented with Scripture texts. And the revelation of God in Christ, if it appear at all, has been given an inconspicuous place, the lessons he teaches made an appendix to a natural theology.

The present problem for the Church follows as matter of course. For our view of nature changes with every change in science and philosophy, and with this change of view must our notions of the God of nature change. Thus natural theology is the handmaid of natural science. Given a certain physics, logic, and ontology, and a corresponding view of God emerges. Change those, and this, too, shall change. For the two are one, nature the living garment of the Almighty, and God the inner reality of the outer world. With

this as basis, no wonder the Church is sore perplexed.

For all nature is transformed. In physics, metaphysics, and anthropology the revolution is complete. It is no longer subject of debate. From kindergarten to university the old has passed away. It is not a change in mere details, but, behold, all things are become new, and not only in the outer world, for man himself has changed. The old logic no longer convinces him, the old philosophy no longer controls his thought, the old problems no longer interest. With a new reason and a new soul, man looks out upon a new heaven and a new earth. Our fathers two generations back were nearer to the men of Greece and Rome than to ourselves. Their discussions are as unreal to us, like the strife of puppets beating the air. How, then, can our problem fail to press for its solution? The wonder is that so many remain undisturbed, and that, on the whole, faith still stands so firm. But the question will not down. With

all nature transformed, is the Christian's God still the same? Can we worship him our fathers worshipped and still call ourselves by the same sacred name?

To this question there are many answers:

Some reply directly: No. Theology falls with the old philosophy and science. In the name of truth we renounce the faith, though the universe lose its soul of loveliness thereby. The answer is natural, for the dilemma has been formed by the Church itself, and if the dilemma hold, if the way is up through nature to nature's God, then it is inevitable. But the dilemma is false. The Christian knows his God not through nature, but through Jesus Christ.

Just as unsound is the dilemma if we take its other horn with many, and say: We defy the new. We have certainty and finality in our theology, and it shall not change with changing times. But this is a losing fight, half-hearted, with yieldings here and there which really yield all. The

position is the very centre of the unrest of the Church. To yield it wholly is the only way to peace. Half-measures are of no avail, though some still strive to patch the old with the new,—notwithstanding our Lord's words,—attempting the impossible.

Others turn from it all and busy themselves with cult and organization and passing activities. They refuse to think, and fancy the problem solved because forgotten. However possible this for the individual, it is impossible for the Church, for thus it forfeits its character as Protestant and returns on the way to Rome.

Again, some from the same logical position would reconstruct. Through the new nature they will pass to God. We shall have a new theology formed on the model seen in the doctrine of evolution and in full accord with a science only a few years out of date — a scheme possible, or more likely impossible, but in any case giving us as the result not the Christian but a new nature God.

Or, interested chiefly in philosophy, we

shall flee from transcendence to immanence, magnify, perhaps ignorantly, the Greek theologians, or try to construct an absolute out of knowledge, completing Aristotle's thought. Illuminating, deeply religious, we may succeed in transfiguring the world and in making every place holy ground. But even so, the result will be one more profound and transcendental philosophy, one more system to have its day and cease to be.

Or, finally, we may turn to the Christian experience and ask its guidance. But though priceless, and though in theology it must ever aid in defining and proving truth, yet has it no deep well of its own from which it can minister to our need. Linked indissolubly to its object, it points not to itself, but to him.

Let us, then, turn to him, that we may ask our Lord. To whom else shall the Christian turn, since he only has the words of eternal life? Let us go to Christ and listen to him — not to the sonorous words of the Westminster divines, not even to

the accents of Christian prayers and hymns, not even to the inspired utterance of prophets and apostles, but to himself. How vast the contrast his words present to all formal theology! Natural theology leads us to a God perfect in wisdom and power, omnipotent and omniscient, it says; philosophy leads us to a God all-perfect in being, or to a God who is perfect thought, or infinite, eternal will. Theology joins these together and adds the holiness of the ancient prophets of Israel's God and declares God is perfect; then God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. As the sonorous words echo in our ears, our souls are filled with wonder, reverence, and awe. God seems, in the mystery of his being, past finding out. His perfectness separates him from us and hides him like a veil, and we perceive him dimly, far away. It is only one more little step, and our great words defining the infinite, the undefinable, themselves disappear, and we

are one with all who have ascended thus to the presence of that which transcends all thought. Only the feeling of wondering awe remains. We are like the nature-priest before the shrine:

> Not knowing what it is, grateful tears he weeps.

But turn to the Christ and ask our Lord: "God is the perfect one, supreme, complete. What is he like, what is the characteristic of his perfectness?" And now from his lips comes no word of science or philosophy, no word that must be translated when uttered to the babes and sucklings in the faith, but — take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the ground on which thou standest is holy ground — "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (We perfect, as he is perfect!) "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what

do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." Thus, *thus* are we to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. Does he thus deal with those who curse him and despitefully use him, and is he, who makes sun to shine and rain to fall, thereby perfect? And there rises before us the image of one whose visage was marred, who was cursed, hated, despitefully used and persecuted, who, led like a lamb to the slaughter, opened not his mouth, and on the cross prayed for those who slew him. And we understand in his light, saying: "We have seen thee, we have seen the Father."

Who ever else in any land or time thus described the perfectness of God? Who else ever thus made such perfectness visible before our eyes? To him who thus sees Christ full of grace and truth as of the

only begotten Son of God, to him who catches a glimpse of that supreme glory, all else is secondary. It sufficeth him. He has found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, and he will not turn back even to them who, after all, saw afar off and through a veil, and without us were not made perfect.

The solution is simple. It makes supreme what Christ made supreme. It sees God perfect as Christ saw him perfect. It takes the place of honor from ontology and science, and gives it to ethics. It turns our thought from the world without to conscience within. It fills our souls not with wonder and amaze, but with humility, faith, and love. It leads us not along the road of dialectics to our God, but by the great highway of service to our fellow-men. The solution is simple. It is the open secret of Jesus. It is the truth which has ever been the hiding of the Church's power, the truth of praise and prayer, of help in the hour of need, of salvation from sin. It is the truth

which makes men strong, which women love and saints reveal. But thus simple as life itself and true as our Christian faith, let us not mistake — adopted with full consciousness of its meaning in our systems, it will revolutionize theology, and, more, adopted with full power in our lives, it will revolutionize the world.

Problems enough remain of high interest, problems of criticism, of history, of physical science, of philosophy. They are of great importance, but their connection with the Christian Church is at most only indirect. No doubt we shall find profit and pleasure and even religious exaltation in their study. But so in many lands have men who have never heard of Christ. What is the relation of the infinite and the finite, of the relative and the absolute, of omnipotence and man's freedom; how man has developed in his long history on earth; how the world was formed and how it is maintained — these and a thousand more shall occupy men in the future as in the past; but, change as our conceptions may,

wax old and vanish as all our knowledge will, the truth of Christ stands sure. He has shown us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Faith doubtless unites the God of supreme grace and truth revealed by Christ with the God of wisdom, power, and life. Christ doubted not that his Father could work his loving will.

Nor will faith doubt that truth. It cannot rest in a dualism of power and love, but certain as is this process of belief, he who knows his Lord will not return to the method of the past. By Christ he will go to God, and not through nature's God to Christ. Christ is first, and his truth revealed immediately to the soul shines clear. Religion shall not be the final step in a logical process, but the light in which the Christian soul sees all the rest. Physics and ontology and anthropology have no authority in this domain. It is not because of the mighty firmament, nor because of circling worlds, nor because of some law of evolution, nor because of the

necessity for a first great cause, nor because we discern final causes, that we as Christians believe in God, but because we have seen him perfect and therefore must believe.

But some doubter will say, Is there not danger in making all to rest thus upon the supreme grace in Jesus Christ, both the proof of God and the definition of his perfectness? Can we dare to stake the issue on this, giving up our claims to understand the universe with its powers as introductory to our proof of God? Doubtless it is dangerous if God be supremely power or wisdom. For these we must seek in the world of power and wisdom. Then is his supreme revelation the natural process of the world, and if we find him not in this we find him not at all. But if the Christian's God be he whom Christ revealed, the one in whom grace and love are supreme, then certain as the facts of our deepest consciousness is the certainty that he is and that he saves all those who put their trust in him. But could the soul

doubt, could it believe that the supreme moral virtue in Jesus Christ were not the revelation of the God of power and wisdom, then it could not hesitate, for to die with Christ would be far better than to live in a world where mere power or wisdom rules supreme.

Nor can the Christian admit a danger to the faith from this whole-hearted reliance upon Christ. For our difficulty has arisen, as I have pointed out, from the other course. With philosophy and through science we have looked upon the world and argued the existence of a nature-God. But the philosophy and the science pass away, and the faith which rests thereon disappears. We would not repeat the error. It is not true that men do not respond to the highest truth, nor can it be that the Church will hesitate to make its appeal to the holiest element in humanity.

To sum up: The Christian sees God in Christ. The essential perfectness of God is shown in forgiveness, love, and blessing.

His perfectness commands our conscience, and in his light we see the highest glory in lowliest service. But we see our sinfulness, for, alas! far other motives have controlled our conduct; but the same knowledge which condemns us heals, for it is the revelation of forgiving love which at once condemns and pardons. With this experience in our souls, knowing immediately that this only is to be worshipped and adored, our lives, by the same necessity, shall show our faith. This it is to see the Christian's God, to realize his presence in experience, and to embody his law in our lives. To disentangle the worship of the Christian God from the nature-worship which has usurped its place, and to make Christian love supreme in the world of men, this is to solve the problem for the Church and for the world, for this age and for all time.

II

THEOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY ALUMNI BANQUET, MAY 12, 1902

BY

ARTHUR CUSHMAN McGIFFERT

WASHBURN PROFESSOR OF CHURCH HISTORY

THEOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

THE present is a time of great theological unrest. Especially among those who are wide awake and open-minded, and who are in sympathy with the modern world and feel its influence, there is marked uncertainty and doubt. Many Christian men and women are complaining that they do not know what to think or what to believe, and even some ministers seem to be all at sea, and quite without a positive and definite and clear-cut message to bring to their people. There can be no question that as a consequence the progress of the gospel is seriously impeded in many quarters. The existing difficulties are due to various causes, among others to the modern criti-

cal philosophy which has made the old Platonic and Neoplatonic view of God and man, that prevailed for so many centuries within the Church, impossible to many leaders of theological thought; still more to modern science, which has changed entirely traditional ideas of the world, not among theologians simply, but among the masses as well; in part, also, to modern missions, which have broken down forever the old comfortable and selfish doctrines of election and the old narrow interpretations of the gospel, and have set many to wondering whether a knowledge of Christ is really necessary to salvation, and whether Christianity is really God's only revelation to men in these latter days; and finally, and just now most patently, to modern historical criticism, which has destroyed the old view of the Bible, and has thrown multitudes into dire confusion as to where to look for religious authority, and as to what to believe on all sorts of religious questions. No careful observer of present conditions can fail to realize

that something is needed, though there may be a wide difference of opinion as to what it is. I venture to think, in common with many others, that one of the most crying needs of the day is a genuine and thoroughgoing reconstruction of our traditional theology — a reconstruction that shall bring out clearly and give the proper emphasis to the great underlying principles of Christianity, which have been obscured by so much temporary and unessential matter, and about which there is to-day so wide-spread an uncertainty and doubt.

But reconstruction that is to be anything more than an aimless and haphazard revision can be accomplished only under the control of some definite principle great enough and far-reaching enough to form the basis of the entire system. Have we, then, any such principle? Are we already in possession of it, or are we only groping for it? I venture to believe that we have such a principle, and that a theological reconstruction, not merely of

temporary but of permanent significance, has already begun, and under the hands of many fellow-workers on both sides the sea is going rapidly forward — a theological reconstruction which will mean ultimately a greater transformation than any the Church has witnessed since the Protestant Reformation.

There are many, it is true, who say it is too soon to reconstruct; that the modern view of the world, the new conceptions in philosophy, the new theories in science, are not yet sufficiently tested, or their bearing sufficiently understood. If a reconstruction of theology means the formation of a system upon the basis of modern philosophy or modern science, I quite agree with such objectors. We are not yet ready for such a work, and when we are our reconstruction will be already out of date.

But I contend, and in my contention I am happy to find myself in agreement with the published views of two of my honored and beloved colleagues,—Dr.

William Adams Brown in his inaugural on "Christ the Vitalizing Principle of Christian Theology," and Dr. Knox in his address on "The Problem for the Church," given at the opening of the present seminary year,—I contend, I say, that the proper basis for a Christian theology—the only theology I am talking about — is altogether different; that it is the historic figure Jesus Christ and the revelation which he has brought. And I contend that we are already in a position to reconstruct our theology on that basis, in a better position than ever before, because the life and work of Jesus Christ are better understood to-day than they have ever been. The trouble with most of the historic theologies is that they have not been based upon the life and work of Jesus; that they have been, in fact, almost everything else but genuinely Christian theologies. In the system of the Alexandrian theologians the eternal Logos, not the historic figure Jesus Christ, had the place of prominence; in the system of Augus-

tine the twofold conception of God as the alone source of good and as absolute will was dominant, and Jesus Christ was quite unnecessary; to the mediæval theologians only his relation to the sacramental system and to the treasury of merits was important; to Calvin the sovereign decree of God was the constructive principle, and the figure of Jesus occupied a subsidiary place. And so in more recent days we have had theological reconstructions based upon the conception of the Church as the perpetual incarnation, the mystical body of the Son of God; upon the doctrine of the divine immanence; upon the theory of evolution; and most recently of all upon the principle of personality, which has been especially emphasized in one of the latest books upon theological reconstruction. We have had plenty of reconstructions upon all sorts of bases, but upon the basis of Jesus Christ's revelation we have had very few.

The great significance of the work of Martin Luther was his recognition of the

central place of Jesus Christ in all Christian living and thinking. But Luther was not a systematic theologian, and to much of the traditional theology he failed to apply his controlling principle, and so handed on to his successors a large part of that theology quite unchanged, and they, instead of completing his work, forgot altogether his fundamental gospel, and put the Bible in the place which he had given to Christ; and very soon the various systems of Protestant dogmatics had become ostensibly, if not in reality, biblical theologies, to the almost complete obscuring of the Christian principle. As a striking illustration of this it may be noticed how in some Protestant systems, notably in the Reformed wing of the Church, the Old Testament has bulked even more largely than the New.

Again, at the beginning of the nineteenth century Schleiermacher returned to the principle of Luther and recognized the historic Christ as the real starting-point in Christian theology. But Schleier-

macher gave so large a place to the religious experience of Christians, and made so much of his theory of religion as the consciousness of dependence upon the Infinite, that he obscured the Christ principle, and led most of his followers off upon a wrong path. Only in our own day, by Albrecht Ritschl, has a really thoroughgoing attempt been made to reconstruct theology upon the Christian basis. But even the sturdiest champion of Ritschl must recognize that while his work surpassed in epoch-making importance the work of any other theologian since the Reformation, he nevertheless left much undone, and the task of reconstruction was only begun by him. The great significance of Ritschl is that he followed Luther in calling the Church back to the historic Christ, and in emphasizing the figure of Jesus as the controlling principle in all Christian theology. Here we must take our stand, and must demand that Christian theology shall be truly Christian and solely Christian. It is not simply that we must demand that Christ

shall be appealed to in conjunction with or even before speculative philosophy and nature and human history, but that we must demand that Christian theology shall be based on Christ alone. The difficulty with many of the best of our modern attempts at theological reconstruction is that, while they recognize the supreme importance of the Christian revelation, they associate other and foreign sources of knowledge with it, and so more or less completely obscure the true meaning of the gospel. Christian theology, I maintain, should be nothing else than Christian theology. It should be based, not chiefly merely, but solely, upon Christ. And the Bible, Old Testament and New, so far as it is used theologically at all and not for religious inspiration merely, should be employed, not as an independent source of Christian theology, but simply as an aid to the better understanding of Christ. And the same is true of the religious experience of ourselves and of others in this and other ages.

But what do we mean when we say

that Jesus Christ is the only true basis of Christian theology? Do we mean the person of Christ, the incarnate Son of God, and so find our constructive principle in the incarnation, as many have done? Do we mean the historic events of his career — birth, death, resurrection, and ascension? Do we mean more generally his life and work? Do we mean his ethical and religious teaching, or his total revelation of God and of divine truth? To speak of Christ as the basis of Christian theology without more nearly defining what we mean is to speak vaguely and to little purpose. Let us look at the matter somewhat more closely.

Christian theology may be defined as the formulation of the principles of the Christian religion, or, to phrase it somewhat differently, the formulation of the controlling principles of the true Christian life, with their presuppositions and consequents. Christian theology has frequently claimed to be much more than this. It has frequently claimed to include a phi-

losophy of God, of the universe, and of man. But with philosophy as such Christian theology is not concerned. It is a practical discipline, and with matters, however interesting and true, which do not in any way affect life it has nothing to do. Christian theology and speculative philosophy have altogether different fields. If it be said that it is merely a question of names, and that it is a matter of indifference whether we use the term "theology" in the narrower or in the broader sense, I reply that the failure to observe the proper distinction at this point has been largely responsible for the wide-spread confusion between essentials and non-essentials in religion and for the common obscuration of the cardinal principles of the gospel. It is time that every one recognized the real significance of Christian theology and distinguished it sharply from the philosophy of religion in general, and still more sharply from metaphysics and cosmology. Christian theology, I repeat, is a strictly practical discipline, dealing

with the principles of the Christian religion, or the principles that underlie and govern the Christian life.

But when this is once recognized the relation of Christ to Christian theology becomes perfectly clear. Christian theology must be primarily a formulation and exposition of the principles which underlay and governed his life. The constructive principle, then, in Christian theology must be the life-purpose of Jesus Christ.

But a serious difficulty suggests itself. Has not modern biblical criticism thrown such discredit upon our sources as to make it impossible for us to stand with assurance upon the picture of Christ contained in the four gospels? And are we not consequently building upon shifting sand in making the historic figure Jesus the sole basis, or, for that matter, even the chief basis, of our theology? If to build our theology upon Christ means to make it a reproduction of all his teaching upon all the matters which he touched, we can hardly do otherwise than answer this

question in the affirmative; for of the genuineness of many of his utterances recorded in one or another of our gospels we cannot be altogether sure. But to base Christian theology upon Christ means nothing of this kind. It means, on the contrary, to make the controlling purpose of his life the controlling principle of our theology. And that purpose we know with all-sufficient clearness. Modern criticism has served only to make plainer than ever before Jesus' life-purpose, and there need be no fear that criticism will ever obscure it. It alone accounts for Christianity, and Christianity is a fact altogether too stubborn to be got rid of. Indeed, the more mercilessly the sources are criticised the more clearly does the essential Christian fact — the dominating purpose of Christ's life — stand out. And that purpose, what was it? It was, in its simplest terms, to impart to others or to induce in others the life which he was living,— the life of freedom from fear and sin, the life of complete victory over the

world through faith in God his father and through devotion to his will,— and so to establish on earth the kingdom of God. That is what it meant to Jesus to be the Messiah: to impart to other men, his brethren, the most precious possession of his life,— the knowledge of and faith in his father God,— and so to bring them salvation. It is this controlling purpose of Christ's life, and the revelation of God's purpose and of our privilege and duty involved in it, that are alone of consequence to us. It is in the purpose itself, in the steadfastness with which he gave himself to its accomplishment, and in the knowledge of God's will and character which is wrapped up in it, that we recognize the divinity of Christ and bow before him as our Master and our Lord. For here is the summit of divine purpose and of human attainment. If God be not here, then there is no God, and none is needed, for we have all we need here.

Going back to this central fact of Christianity,— going back to Christ's life-pur-

pose,— we get from it one after another of the great truths of the Christian system. We get from it, for instance, the Christian view of God, Christ's father and ours: a God of love, whose purpose of love for his children is realized in Christ's life of service; a God who is ever giving himself for his children, even as Christ gave himself for his brethren. We get also the Christian view of the world: that it belongs to God, who is working in and through it to establish his kingdom, and that for the child of God it is a field for service, for conflict, and for victory. We get also the Christian view of men: children of God and brethren one of another, whose true life is not meat and drink, health and wealth, but to do the will of God their father in the service of their brethren. We get also the Christian view of salvation: victory over the world and sin and death, and the conscious fulfilling of the purposes of God. And we get also the Christian view of Christ: the one who has given us his faith in God his father, and so has

brought God to us and given us the victory over the world and sin and death which was his.

All this our Christ principle gives us and much more. But much also which has found a place in our historic theologies it does not give us. But whatever it does not has no rightful place in Christian theology, however true it may be. The creation of the world, the origin of man, the historicity of Adam, the fall, the deluge, Jonah, the nature and the attributes of the Absolute — with all these matters Christianity has absolutely nothing to do, any more than with astronomy or geology or mathematics.

To make earnest with the life-purpose of Christ; to make it absolutely controlling in Christian theology, and upon it as a basis to reconstruct our traditional systems from the bottom to the top; upon it as a basis to formulate a genuine Christian theology, not for this age alone but for ages to come — that is the task of Christian theologians, of Christian thinkers

in general, whatever their place or calling. It is a task for no one man alone, but for many working together with the one common purpose and the one common spirit. For Christian theology, if it is genuinely Christian, cannot be a dividing, it must be a uniting force.

Let us, then, brethren, have a theology — a Christian theology for the twentieth and for all the coming centuries. Let us have a Christian theology on which we can unite; which we can understand, and make others, even plain men, understand; which we can preach; which we can live and die for; which we can conquer the world with. Let us know what it is that has made us victors and free men, and let us tell it free and full and clear. Let us put it, if we will, into creeds, not as tests of orthodoxy or of heresy, but as manifestoes, as declarations of the Christian purpose. I believe, and you believe, and our brethren all about us believe, and therefore we live and work not alone but together for the

redemption of the world. I believe — yes, I am sure I can say *we* believe, all of us — whatever else and more — at least in our Lord Jesus Christ, in his victory for himself and for us over the world and sin and death; and we believe in God, his father and ours, through faith in whom and through devotion to whose will he won his victory, as we too, following him, may win ours; and we believe in the kingdom of God, the ever-growing realization of God's purpose in the ever-enlarging community of those who through faith in him are overcoming the world and sin and death; and we believe in the Church of Christ, the association and coöperation of all that believe in Jesus Christ and in his father God, for the serving and the saving of their brethren, far and near, that they too may have that faith in God and that devotion to his will which shall make them also victors over the world and sin and death.

III

THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

AN ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, GIVEN MAY 13, 1902

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I ASK you to consider some aspects of this theme. No question on the subject arose in New Testament times. The familiar verse, "And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15), is sufficient proof of this. It is noteworthy that in the full freshness of early Christianity, under the first impression of the unique personality of Jesus, such worth and weight should have been ascribed to the Old Testament. The old Jewish Scriptures were not incongruous with Christ. There was no break in the line.

The case is somewhat different to-day.

Everything is now questioned, and with Christ made at home in the world, and his place in Christianity emphasized, it is impossible that critical inquiry should not be directed toward the phenomenon that the early Christian writings are bound in a volume more than three quarters of which was written centuries before Christ appeared.

It is inevitable that the question should be asked, Are the Old Testament books really Christian Scriptures?

The question has found two extreme answers. One party denies that they are. The Old Testament antedates Christianity and is on a lower plane. The spirit of Christianity is lacking. The Old Testament may represent a stage of the human journey on the way to Christ, but it is a stage to which we do not revert when we have reached Christ himself. Christ gives a new revelation of God, so original, so profound, so penetrating, that it is practically a new God whom he reveals. In any case, the Old Testament is so elemen-

tary, by comparison, and looks at religion so constantly from a wrong angle, that for religious purposes we can safely neglect it.

Another party, diminishing, but still large, goes to the opposite extreme, and affirms not only that the Old Testament books are Christian Scriptures, but also that they are fully on a par, for the Christian religion, with the books of the New Testament. This proposition is defended historically on the ground of needful preparation for Christ, which belongs to the Christian system, and it is illustrated practically by the uncritical use of selected parts of the Old Testament to maintain doctrines and enforce precepts and unfold experiences belonging to Christianity. In this view the Old Testament is treated as a flat surface, without perspective or shading, and the New Testament as a mere continuation of the Old Testament on the same plane, accidentally separated from it by book-divisions. Most of those who hold this view are good people, Bible-

loving and sincere. There are also some scoffers, who identify both Testaments, and gleefully discredit the New Testament from what they find to object to in the Old Testament.

It is probable that the Old Testament, and religion generally, suffer more from the latter view than from the former. It is much more wide-spread. The facts are plainly against it. It makes a claim for the Old Testament which is untenable, and against which the moral sense is sure at length to revolt. Many — not scoffers — have rejected Christianity because of what seems the dead weight of the Old Testament attached to Christianity. Treated thus mechanically, the Old Testament has grown to seem to many thoughtful people not a support for Christianity, but a handicap. Christianity without any Old Testament at all is simpler and clearer and more effective than Christianity with an Old Testament exaggerated to this degree.

We should all say, of course, that if we

had to choose between the New Testament and the Old Testament, the Old Testament would be left lying. We are assured that it is Jesus Christ who has transformed the world. We know whom we have believed, and it is he. He is our Friend, our Example, our Redeemer, our Lord. The God whom he shows is the God whom we adore and love, the kingdom he has set up is the kingdom to which our enthusiasms belong. Whatever intimations of him the Old Testament may contain, they are shadowy, whatever truth about God it teaches, it is incomplete, whatever announcements for man it makes, they are elementary, in comparison with the rich abundance of spiritual knowledge and power which crowds the New Testament and makes it the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not going to retreat from the glory of noonday to live in the twilight of the cave. If we could have only one Testament, we should not hesitate which to choose.

But is there no middle ground between

the two extremes? Must we either abandon our Old Testament, and lose three fourths of our Bible, or exalt our Old Testament to a place beyond its right, in defiance of truth? We have to ask, with discrimination, What religious value has the Old Testament for Christians?

The question is not as to its historical value. Only fools deny that. It has value for national history — very great. It is our main source for Hebrew history, and our chief secondary source for the history of the surrounding peoples. These documents have, of course, unique value for religious history, for the Hebrew religion, and for the religion of Christians, which sprang from Judaism and has its roots in it. They have, of course, also, importance for theology, which, if studied soundly, must be studied historically; the Biblical theology of the Old Testament is one historical basis. But religious value is different.

There are those, I know, who deny this difference, who confuse historical value

with religious value. These persons usually mean, by historical value, literal accuracy; they turn the Old Testament narrative into a phonographic record from divine lips, destroy its real historical character, and, with the best intentions, destroy also its permanent religious value. A religion that is bound up with the literalness of the story about man and woman and fruit-tree and serpent and flaming sword is a religion that is every moment in peril, and for large numbers already lost.

Religious value may have historical connections, and in this case it does have them; but it lies, essentially, in religious ideas and religious power. Thus taken, has the Old Testament any contribution to make to the present religious life of Christians?

It is certain that religious use has been made of it in the Christian Church from the beginning. Prophecy and psalm, law-books and histories, have been taken into the service of Christian meditation, devotion, and conduct.

But we cannot answer our question on

any basis of custom and tradition. Some of the traditional use of the Old Testament is certainly wrong. Is any of it right and profitable? We must apply ourselves independently to a fresh inquiry as to the religious authority and worth of the Old Testament.

It would, I suppose, be found true that the severities of the Old Testament, both in the history of extermination and other violence, and in the lyrics of exultation over foes, have fostered the austere grimness of some phases of Christianity, as well as the easy human tendency to identify one's own enemies with those of God. All competent students would agree that the fanciful interpretations, by which alone large parts of the Old Testament could be made spiritually fruitful, have corrupted the simplicity of the gospel. Now we are learning to understand things more naturally; we refuse to allegorize, because that is impertinent, since it means reading our own notions into the Bible, instead of seeking in it the ideas of God and his ser-

vants; we see that the prophets were preachers, whose predictions of the future were born of moral earnestness and spiritual insight, and were conditioned, in the form of them, by the environment of those who uttered them. We are learning to apply a truer ethical standard to the Old Testament men, and not to think cruelty right because God's people displayed it, or imprecation Christian because pious singers uttered it. And all this at least restricts the religious use which, with our present light, we can make of the Old Testament.

There is yet another difficulty arising from obscurities of interpretation. There are passages of the Old Testament whose meaning we do not know. The attempts made to elucidate them in our current translations are guesswork, due to the supposed necessity of contriving some English equivalent for each Hebrew word and phrase, or else to ignorance of the real difficulty. A large part of these difficulties spring from corruptions of the

text to be translated. The Old Testament languages are not complicated, but the writings have had a rough experience. Most of them are made by compilation or accretion,— older documents worked together or added to one another,— most have passed through the hands of editors who have sometimes become commentators. Their additions can sometimes be detected, sometimes only suspected. Mere copyists have done their work imperfectly, and the mistake of one has been made worse by another, so that here and there the uncertainty grows hopeless.

This doubt as to the basis for interpretation tends to make it difficult for those who feel it to use the Old Testament for religious purposes, and leads some, in despair, to confine themselves to the surface of it, and to treat the Authorized Version — or, if they are particularly conscientious, the Revised Version — as the inspired text for them — which is really the stultifying of knowledge.

Now, in view of these facts, I desire briefly to present considerations in behalf

of the permanent religious value of the Old Testament, and, if I can, partly to define that value.

In regard to the defective form of the Old Testament it is enough for the present purpose to say that while these defects leave uncertainties of detail, they do not disturb the teaching as a whole, nor damage the Old Testament as a channel of worship. Some defects can be removed, and when they are we can use the text with renewed confidence at such points. But even those defects which cannot now be removed, and probably never will be, as long as we need books at all, do not so affect the worth of the Old Testament books as to prevent their intelligent use for the highest religious purposes. The text as it is will serve its heavenly ends.

What, then, of the contents? Here the question at once arises as to the point of view from which we are to consider them. From what point of view has the judgment already expressed been formed? What point of view is in fact the true one?

What is the test of the Old Testament

as a religious authority? It can surely be no other than the universal Christian test, of which many of us have lately been emphatically reminded.* If Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of God, so that all doctrines, opinions, rules, and practices which claim to be of God must conform to his teachings, life, and spirit in order to establish the claim, then the teachings, life, and spirit of Jesus Christ are the only touchstone by which we can recognize the religious value of the Old Testament, among the rest. Whatever accords with the teachings, purpose, and spirit of Jesus Christ has religious value for us. Whatever does not accord with these lacks religious value for us, whether it stands in the Old Testament or in day before yesterday's sermon.

It must be remembered that to say that a thing has no religious value for us is not the same with saying that it never had religious value at all. Many forms of religion have real value now for those

* See Address II.

who adhere to them, while to us they have none. If we should find, therefore, that there are elements in the Old Testament religion which are of no present religious value to us, it would not follow that they had no importance in the time of them, and were not of divine origin. Partial truth, involving error by its very partiality, may have been the best possible in the times of ignorance. Human failure to apprehend the truth that was offered may reflect itself in the record, while along with this the religious life may have been strong and sound.

It is very important, also, to remember the breadth of Christ's spirit. Christ is not narrow or exclusive, but comprehensive. No small Christ can be the standard by which the Old Testament's yield in religion shall be judged. There is a popular criticism of the Old Testament which assumes that amiability is the sole mark of Christ, and that the note of sternness heard in the Old Testament is discordant with the Christian spirit. This criticism

forgets the dark realities of sin with which Jesus wrestled, and the awful unsparingness of rejected love. We must, in some degree, get the measure of Jesus before we can use Jesus as a measure of the Old Testament and its religion. Failure here leads to one of two extremes: to the rejection of strong Old Testament teaching, because Jesus is made so narrow as to leave no room for it, or to the imposing of a mystic sense upon passages whose natural sense does not accord with the interpreter's small conception of Jesus. The God of the Old Testament was severe toward sin, but he was not therefore un-Christlike, for Christ could be severe. Or, to take a widely different illustration, if the Song of Songs is to be saved to the canon of Scripture — if, that is to say, it is to appear conformable to the standard of Jesus Christ — it will be, not by revamping the traditional view which finds in it an allegory of Christ and the Church, but by expanding the thought of Christ till it consecrates all love, human as well as divine.

The question might seem a simple one, where our standard is deposited — how we may learn the teachings and spirit of Jesus Christ, so as to apply them to the Old Testament. Our primary source of knowledge about Christ is, of course, the New Testament. There his words are recorded; there his life is sketched by his friends; there his deeds are described, and the impression made by him reflected; there his disciples have set down his instruction, and the development and outcome of that instruction, under the forms in which they were able to conceive them. Christ's influence must in any case have been powerful and far-reaching; but the record has done much to conserve it. No one here will pretend that the modern Church reflects the spirit of Christ perfectly, yet if no New Testament had been written, his image would surely have been distorted far more than it actually has been, even if it had not already become shadowy. Surely, then, it is in the New Testament that we must find the

standard by which we are to judge the Old.

But there are difficulties. It is evident that Jesus and his disciples had no detailed purpose of instructing men how they should view the Old Testament — that this did not dominate their minds. For what they say about it is fragmentary and incomplete. We get only hints and illustrations of their attitude toward it. There are books from which they do not cite, ranges of the Old Testament which do not seem to have been before their minds.

Nor is their attitude uniform toward those parts of it with which they deal. All are treated with respect, and most with reverence, but some with present approval and acquiescence, while others are regarded as temporary and inferior. We need only be reminded of the law of divorce, of the oath, and of retaliation, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 31–42). If they had covered the whole field, how far would such criticisms have extended? The New Testament gives us no answer to this inquiry.

Nor, finally, are we sure of the accuracy of all the record we have.

We must take another factor into the account, and, to this end, gain another point of view. Why should we expect the New Testament to give us full instruction about the Old? Is the New Testament then a new law-book? Is that the essence of the gospel, that we have a new book of rules — one code substituted for another? The value of the New Testament lies in the power of a new life which it brings to us. It introduces us to Jesus Christ, in whom the new life has its perennial seat, and when the contact is made, the new life streams into us from him, and there is no book between. The book and its teachings remain the living portrait of him and the illustration of the life he desires for us; we are not strong enough to do without it, but we must apply its principles in solving for ourselves the problems of truth and duty. The new life dwelling in us is the spirit of Christ, and it is under the control of that spirit that we must, in the last resort, take up our own posi-

tion with reference to the religious value of the Old Testament. We must do it in humility, of course. We must do it with the guidance of the concrete examples which Jesus left behind. We must do it with consideration for the views of others. We must do it with due regard for God's voice in the souls of all our brotherhood. But do it we must if we are to have it done at all. The test of the Old Testament, for purposes of religion, must be the teachings, life, and spirit of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, and also, and essentially, in the minds and hearts of those who believe in him.

It thus becomes immaterial whether or not the New Testament answers explicitly all our questions about the religious value of the Old. As far as we possess the spirit of Christ, revealed in the New Testament and regnant in our souls, so far we are qualified to estimate that religious value for ourselves. We possess the spirit of Christ imperfectly, no doubt. Therefore we may err in our judgment of

that of which the spirit of Christ is the test. This is our present limitation. But in no other way can we go so far toward the full truth. Nothing can be substituted for our best apprehension of the spirit of Christ in deciding what religious treasure the Old Testament has for us.

In the field of doctrine we may illustrate the matter by the *character of God* as shown in the Old Testament. When we sum up the impressions and teachings about the God of the ancient Hebrews, the general result is very definite. We find a personal Being, of great majesty, dignity, and power, the Creator and Ruler of men; a Being of holiness and transcendence; a Being of righteousness, who promotes righteousness in others and punishes every breach of it, whose government is a moral government, and from whose decisions there is no appeal; a Being of kindness, tenderness, and helpfulness, with gracious care for those who confide in him, whose plans are at length to be worked out and his desires realized in the unity of men

under his benevolent sway, amid the exhibition of the divine glories of righteousness and universal peace. With each stroke of this drawing the New Testament picture is in accord. To this extent the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ indorse the older revelation.

But when we study certain portions of the Old Testament by themselves, the impression is somewhat different. We find that, over a large area of the history, God appears to care for one small people alone. The region of his power is simply the region of that people's communal and national life. Elsewhere other gods are ruling. Moreover, for a time, the function of Yahweh is not so much to secure his people's righteousness as to give them success in war and prosperity in times of peace. Both the universal and the ethical are long in the background. Further, the beginnings of his worship in Israel, as far as they are not obscure, are very rudimentary. Polytheism lies back of monotheism. From our standpoint we feel the

imperfection of the Old Testament views. We explain them by the principle of development; the Old Testament view of God is passing from the lower to the higher — from the conceptions common to men to the unique conception of the inimitable King of kings. This means that when we apply our test at certain separate points the Old Testament doctrine of God is found wanting.

This appears more positively in such a story as that of the sacrifice of Isaac. It is a fine story — the supreme test of obedience. But what conception of God must those have held who could believe that he exacted of his most faithful servant an act of obedience like this? The defect appears also in the utterances of vengeance, unrelieved and exultant, in which some phrases in the Psalms seem to express what was felt to be the mind of Jehovah toward the foes of his people. They do not set forth the God in whom we have learned to believe. Our God can be stern, and often must be stern, but he is not vin-

dictive. The Old Testament thought of God has not fully emerged from darkness into the light.

The study of the old Hebrew God is not made worthless by these facts. It becomes more and more a matter of intense interest. For it is a development not of *God* with which that study is concerned, but of the thought of God, the knowledge of God. The Christian God is the eternal God. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom we learn to know in him, was not a new God when Jesus came. The Old Testament men saw him, but they saw him dimly. The history of all true religion has been a history of the attempts of men to lay hold of the Christian God.

To exhibit the subject fully one should set forth the Christian God according to our present apprehension of him — in its turn doubtless very imperfect. This is now impossible, and it is the less needful because it has been done in this place, with great competence and eloquence,

but a few months ago.* Yet this may be said, just now, that the total impression conveyed by the Old Testament doctrine of God, accurate as its many features must be recognized to be, is a very different thing from the God whose name we learn when we go to school to Christ. The proportions are different. The dominant force is not clearly the same. To find the Father who reveals himself in compelling love, through Jesus Christ, for the redemption of the whole world, we must come out of the Old Testament, and learn the lesson, still novel and strange to many, of living unreservedly in the New.

A few words on the authority of the Old Testament *precepts* for us. An old distinction was drawn between the ceremonial and the moral law. This has convenience still. It is essentially imperfect because the two are so interwoven that it is hard for us to distinguish them, and because the entire priestly conception of duty in the Old Testament erases the dis-

* See Address I.

tinction altogether. But when it is said that the ceremonial law is not of authority for us, we understand it fairly well, and it blots out the element of command from large sections of Ezekiel and the later prophets, the Pentateuch, Chronicles, and Ezra. With the moral law the case is felt to be different. The moral law is grounded in the character of God, and has therefore an element of permanence. This position is unquestionable; but it does not follow that all the Old Testament precepts in the domain of morals have authority for us. Some of them are adapted to men at a low stage. Some are distinctly corrected or repudiated in the New, such as the law of divorce and the law of the oath. Some are enlarged and transformed, such as the law against murder. And in regard to them all, as far as they are felt to have present force, an analysis would probably show that the force they have is the force of inward moral conviction, with which they are in accord, rather than the force

of a statute imposed by external authority, however august.

This leads to another point. That the law was not a mere matter of precept for outward observance was understood by the best Hebrews before the prophets had finished their work. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it," was the word through Jeremiah (xxxi. 33), and the psalmist prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. li. 10). The right life had its roots within. The whole long conflict between the prophets and the ceremonialists, in which the prophets showed their abhorrence of a sacrificial system that tolerated wicked hearts and lives, points to the same conviction.

But the great, moulding personalities of the New Testament, Jesus, Paul, and John, lay such stress upon this as to give it a new aspect. With them the authority that controls moral life is not

at all the authority of a statute; it is solely the authority of an inward principle, a principle of loyalty and a principle of love. The normal Christian life, as they represent it, is not lived by precept, but by the working out of an enlightenment of the soul, energized by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament, we must repeat, is not the second edition of a law-book. The more experienced and advanced may, of course, instruct the more ignorant, and we find many directions what to do in the New Testament, and very precious they are, especially those that came from Jesus himself. But there is no force in precepts to get themselves obeyed. These were not the things that Jesus depended on for the transformation of life and the renewal of the world. He said it was better that he should go away, that the Comforter — the indwelling and controlling Spirit — might come. The normal Christian experience is not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

If the average life of Christian men were normal, one need say no more. In fact, we cannot dismiss precepts quite so summarily. True, the New Testament religion, fundamentally and normally, is not a religion of precepts. It is a religion of spiritual life. The region of spiritual life, which shows itself, spontaneously, in the loving service of God and man, is far above all systems that aim at righteousness by precept. But the best men do not always live in this higher region, and there are many men who have never breathed its air at all. Therefore the precept is not yet superfluous. Commands were given to the Hebrews long ago, when their religious development was imperfect. Some people now are in a stage of development no whit further advanced. It is something to hold men by a command, if that is the only way in which they can be held. Love is better than grudging obedience; but obedience, however grudging, is better than wild license. Good men sometimes lose the inward glow and fire, and have to

fall back on the steady support of what they *ought* to do.

So Wordsworth testifies, in the "Ode to Duty":

> There are who ask not if thine eye
> Be on them; who, in love and truth,
> Where no misgiving is, rely
> Upon the genial sense of youth.
> Glad hearts! without reproach or blot,
> Who do thy work, and know it not;
> Long may the kindly impulse last,
> But thou, if they should totter, teach
> them to stand fast!
>
> Serene will be our days and bright,
> And happy will our nature be,
> When love is an unerring light,
> And joy its own security.
> And they a blissful course may hold,
> Even now, who, not unwisely bold,
> Live in the spirit of this creed;
> Yet find that other strength, according
> to their need.

We are called to liberty, but if we ever are tempted to misuse our liberty, it is

good to feel beneath us the rock of the eternal righteousness.

But the Christian ideal is that of life in the Spirit. "If ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinances, Handle not, nor taste, nor touch? . . . For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. ii. 20, 21; iii. 3).

I turn to consider briefly the Old Testament as a book of *religious experience.* Whatever may be the limitations of the Old Testament, there is no doubt that the men out of whose life it sprang had found God and held communion with him. The Being whom they reached in their way was the same that we reach in our way, though they could not know him so well as we are privileged to do. Their apprehension of him was so vivid, their trust in him was so complete, their gifts of expression were so unusual, their wealth of illustration so inexhaustible, that they produced a literature of spiritual aspiration and worship

without a parallel. It is a heritage into which we have entered. Many of these religious lyrics are local and temporary in their coloring. Some are marred by sentiments ill according with the Christian principle of love. But these things have not checked, and are not likely to check, the Christian Church in its use of the Psalms and all the worshipful parts of the Old Testament as a means of devotion. Enveloping all defects, swallowing them up and putting them out of sight, is the great sweep of religious fervor, the intensity of spiritual longing and joy, which is borne onward in them to all the generations. I take it that what holds the Old Testament to the New, more than anything else, is the sense of oneness in religious experience by which men trained in Christ's school respond to the Hebrew utterances of faith, and, with no feeling of a gulf to be bridged, or the need of a glass to set right the vision, adopt these utterances as their own. When they do, no doubt, they cannot forget that they are

Christians. When they go back to the Old Testament for the speech of their devotion they do not leave Christ behind them. That would be preposterous. The God whom we worship in the Psalms and the other Hebrew literature of religious experience is the God revealed in Jesus Christ. We worship the God we know, and not the God Asaph or Heman knew. For religious fervor speaks the same language always.

When we interpret their words to our minds we must do it from their position. The New Testament was not before their eyes, nor Jesus Christ before their thought. But when we adopt their language in our devotion, we expand it to the fulness of our richer knowledge. What does not befit our knowledge we can no longer use. The further ranges of our knowledge demand other expression. But within its own wide limits the Old Testament service of Christian devotion remains and will remain.

We worship in the Psalms, we adore

with the prophets. Those men knew God indeed. They clung to him with their souls. We may put more of knowledge into our worship, but not more of reality. As we worship we feel ourselves most akin to them, we draw near to God with them, we rejoice in the inheritance we have from them, and we rejoice, in their behalf as well as ours, in that larger inheritance, the fulfilment of their noblest hopes, into which, by the grace of God, they have entered long ago, and for which we still hope and pray.

These remarks illustrate the Christian view of the Old Testament as a book of religion. If much space has been given to the need of a discriminating use of it, it is because this need is real, and often overlooked by the zealous, and because to overlook it sets hindrances in the way of honest faith in God. If emphasis has been laid upon the rule which the discriminating judgment must apply, it is because only those who perceive in Jesus the standard of all religion are delivered

from the dangers of shallowness and the isolation of subjective mistakes; and only they have entered with clear mind into the secret of Christianity.

The religious value of the Old Testament to Christian people may be summed up, then, in a few sentences. Christianity presupposes the Old Testament. Jesus found spiritual life in it. He led his followers, from the outset, into a richer use of it, so that those who walked the way after him were conscious of the long vista behind — the straight track by which religious truth and power had come. He points us backward, too, into the same great country of God's ancient revelation. There is true religion there, with the value of originality, the value of large setting in the history of men, the value of abundant detail, the value of mighty experiences, the value of divine knowledge embodied in literature, the value of strong imperatives, the value of the penitent's confession, the value of the seer's vision.

With this mighty background Jesus

truly harmonizes, but from it, also, he stands out distinct and commanding. The background sets him off, but itself is incomplete without him. Those human hands to which God intrusted the painting of it had not the central, perfect figure before them, that they might bring every detail into full accord with him. God was gradually working out his design — not forcing it upon men, but letting it dawn upon them by degrees. Of course, then, there were imperfections. There were great facts but partly seen, great obligations but partly understood, the life of precept recognized, and the life of free obedience in love feebly grasped. We have to supplement the defects of the Old Revelation by the abundance of the Newer, and it is most of all in the spirit of contrition, of submission, of adoration, that with Jesus as our companion we enter freely into the life of the ancient worshipper.

I have said almost nothing about prophecy — too great a subject for a paragraph. Here, too, there is enduring value,— to be

recognized with discrimination,— a value which resides not so much in the detailed fulfilment of specific predictions as in the everlasting power of the divine principles of life which prophecy reiterates, and by which alone the kingdom of God can come.

The Old Testament, then, is not the primary source of the Christian religion. But it is the embodiment of a genuine religion, which, as far as its elements have permanent vitality, Christianity has taken up into itself. The promise of universality made to the Old Testament religion proves to be conditioned on its merging into that which was destined to spring from it, to supersede it, to envelop it, to discard the perishable in it, and to give new glory to that in it which could endure. The revelation in Jesus Christ, and that alone, determines what is perishable and what endures. That which can endure in the presence of Jesus Christ is full of instruction and stimulus and spiritual devotion through all the ages, until every partial

revelation is swallowed up in the abundant light of the glory of God, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gentlemen of the Graduating Class: I have dared to lead your thoughts this way to-night,—your last night with us,—because in this Book is our message, and because the New Testament fills only a quarter of it, and it is of practical consequence to know what attitude we ought to take and teach others to take toward the earlier and larger part. I have not desired to raise suspicions about it, but to allay them, if you have any. I have not sought to limit your use of it, but to help you to revel in it with free minds and clear minds, that your souls may be more and more enriched by it, and your ministry clothed with power. And may the Spirit of Christ reveal to you, increasingly, its hidden beauties, and enable you to drink abundantly of its perennial springs.

For the rest, a few sentences cannot

utter the feelings of this moment. You regret, as I do, that the last word of cheer and farewell cannot be spoken to you by one in whom you have been accustomed to confide through all your course here, and whose bodily presence is not with us, though his thoughts certainly have been about us to-day. But this I can say, for myself and for my colleagues: We are very sorry to have you go; but we should be more sorry still if you were not going. For you are going out to service, and service is the greatest thing on earth—service inspired by love and dominated by loyalty. This is the lesson of the New Testament; this is the lesson of the Old Testament also. This finds its response in the heart of the Christian man who knows that he is not his own, for he is bought with a price. This makes it worth while to live. Under the benediction of this privilege you have been studying here. It will rest still upon the few of you who mean to take further opportunities of study. For the end of all preparation is